United Nations A/53/PV.94

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

94th plenary meeting
Thursday, 18 February 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/53/835)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In document A/53/835, the Secretary-General informs the Assembly that 40 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: Reports of the General Committee

Fourth report of the General Committee (A/53/250/Add.3)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now draw the attention of representatives to the fourth report of the General Committee, concerning a request submitted by Chile for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the Customs Cooperation Council in the General Assembly".

In paragraph 1 of the report, the General Committee decides to recommend to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Observer status for the Customs Cooperation Council in the General Assembly" should be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in the agenda of the current session this additional item?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

99-85119 (E)

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May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 16 *(continued)*

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(a) Election of seven members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/440/Add.1)

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: In accordance with General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination upon their nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

Members will recall that at its 43rd meeting, held on 26 October 1998, the General Assembly elected six members to the Committee, and there remained one vacancy from among the Western European and other States from a previous session, as well as one vacancy from among the African States for a term of office beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2001.

In this connection, the Assembly has before it document A/53/440/Add.1, containing the nomination by the Economic and Social Council to fill the vacancy remaining in the Committee from among the African States.

I should like to remind members that, as of 1 January 1999, the following States from among the African States will still be members or will have become members of the Committee: Benin, Cameroon, the Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Therefore, those eight States are not eligible in this election.

As indicated in document A/53/440/Add.1, the Economic and Social Council has nominated the Comoros to fill the vacancy remaining from among the African States.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot. However, in accordance with paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, the Assembly may, in elections to subsidiary organs, dispense with secret balloting when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare the Comoros elected a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on 18 February 1999 and expiring on 31 December 2001?

It was so decided.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I congratulate the Comoros, which has been elected a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Regarding the remaining vacancy from among the Western European and other States from a previous session, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on it upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of a Member State from that region.

I therefore propose that the Assembly keep this sub-item on the agenda of the fifty-third session.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to that procedure.

It was so decided.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 16.

Agenda item 17 *(continued)*

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(h) Appointment of a member of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/53/110)

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: As indicated in document A/53/110, in accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, I have consulted the

regional group concerned, in this case the group of Asian States, and on the basis of the candidate submitted by that group, I have requested Japan to propose a candidate.

As further indicated in document A/53/110, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Sumihiro Kuyama of Japan for appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2000 and expiring on 31 December 2004.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint this candidate?

It was so decided.

(i) **Confirmation of the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development**

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/799)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In paragraph 2 of his note, the Secretary-General proposes the extension of the appointment of Mr. Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for another term of office of four years, beginning on 15 September 1999 and ending on 14 September 2003.

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to confirm the extension of the appointment of Mr. Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for another term of office of four years, beginning on 15 September 1999 and ending on 14 September 2003?

It was so decided.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): I would like to express, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the nomination of Mr. Rubens Ricupero for a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The Secretary-General's expression of confidence in Mr. Ricupero is fully shared by the Group of 77 and China. We therefore take this opportunity to extend to him our warm congratulations and best wishes for another successful term.

Since Mr. Ricupero's appointment as Secretary-General of UNCTAD in 1995, we have witnessed a major transformation of UNCTAD. His intellectual leadership, vision and commitment to development have been critical to the re-emergence of UNCTAD as a serious, competent and responsible organization providing a balanced treatment of a wide range of interrelated issues in development in an increasingly interdependent and globalizing world. Today more than ever before, UNCTAD is needed as a forum for the dialogue on development and the related issues of trade, finance, technology, investment and sustainable development.

UNCTAD's high-quality analyses of major developments in the world economy, and particularly of salient issues and concerns facing the developing countries, have been very helpful to our preparations in these major areas. Within the United Nations, UNCTAD has also been responsive to the need for reform, and this has not only led to greater efficiency in the intergovernmental and secretariat machinery of the organization, but has also enabled UNCTAD to more closely collaborate with civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the business community. Despite these gains, however, the level of resources allocated to UNCTAD has been significantly reduced in recent times. We therefore urge greater support for its activities.

As we look forward to and plan for UNCTAD X, our Group hopes that the Conference will provide an important opportunity for the United Nations system and the international community to collectively reflect on development in the context of globalization. Out of it should come strategies and policies to ensure the successful integration of all countries, particularly developing countries, into the world economy. We therefore trust that under the continuing guidance and leadership of Mr. Ricupero, UNCTAD will effectively respond to these challenges.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Australia, Canada, Japan, the United States and New Zealand. On the occasion of the reappointment of Mr. Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), we would like to express our

full support for UNCTAD as the focal point for the integrated treatment of development and related issues within the United Nations as called for in Midrand, South Africa, in 1996.

In the Midrand Declaration, Member States gave a ringing endorsement to the reform of UNCTAD. Among the results were commitments to careful priority-setting, with an eye to generating practical results, and improved governance, including greater transparency, accountability and cost-effectiveness. Another true success of UNCTAD IX was the adoption of least developed countries issues as integral, cross-cutting and priority tasks for all four sectoral divisions. Midrand heralded a new spirit of cooperation in which the Member States worked together with the UNCTAD secretariat to streamline and improve the organization. A vigorous hands-on, take-charge approach at the highest levels within UNCTAD will help ensure the realization of the Midrand vision. I would like to mention three specific points in this connection.

First, in the mid-term review, the Trade and Development Board stressed Midrand's emphasis on least developed countries and called on UNCTAD to follow up the High-level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least Developed Countries' Trade Development. With only 12 months remaining before Bangkok, a number of basic elements of the work programme remain, and we will be looking to Mr. Ricupero's leadership in ensuring that these tasks are fulfilled efficiently, effectively and in a transparent manner.

Secondly, UNCTAD's comparative advantages are in trade and investment. The mid-term review sought a unique contribution for UNCTAD through its analytical function and by linking research and action, analysis and policies. UNCTAD's trade division is crucial in assisting developing countries on the critical issues in the upcoming World Trade Organization ministerial meeting.

Thirdly, UNCTAD's contact with civil society is an important feature of its work. We expect to consult closely with UNCTAD in developing appropriate ground rules for partnership initiatives with the private sector.

In conclusion, Midrand achieved a fundamental restructuring of UNCTAD, which held great promise and must continue, because the trade and development issues we are faced with today are even more critical than they were four years ago in the process of globalization. A rededication to this effort is the best way to ensure that UNCTAD X will build upon the successes of Midrand. We look forward to working with Secretary-General Ricupero, the Group of 77, the European Union and all other Member States, as well as the UNCTAD secretariat, as we prepare for this process.

Mr. Henze (Germany): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European Countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the early decision on the extension of the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In the preparation for its tenth conference, in February of the year 2000, in Bangkok, UNCTAD is in need of an experienced Secretary-General at its helm.

Any decision on an appointment is to be considered against the background of the requirements which the prospective holder of the appointment must be able to meet. The qualifications of the incumbent Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in our view, fully justify the extension of his appointment.

We trust that the process of improving the efficiency of UNCTAD, to which the European Union attaches great importance, will remain high on the Secretary-General's agenda in his second term of office.

In conclusion, I should like to express our conviction that the positive spirit which so far has guided our relationship with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will also prevail during his forthcoming term of office, and I would like to take this opportunity to extend to him our congratulations and best wishes for a successful second term.

Mr. Tchoulkov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): My delegation gladly supports the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the appointment of Mr. Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for another term of office of four years.

We believe that this is a correct decision. Mr. Ricupero took charge of UNCTAD over three years ago at a difficult time for the Conference. The Conference was then facing the very complex task of implementing the timely reform of inter-agency and institutional machinery of cooperation in trade and development; of focusing the programme of work on the real needs of members; and of transforming UNCTAD into an effective agency, capable of reacting to problems arising for States in such interrelated areas as trade and development in circumstances in which the globalization of economies and the liberalization of world markets had become decisive factors of economic and social development.

A turning point in the execution of this task was UNCTAD IX, held in Midrand, South Africa, which determined the direction for reform in the organization. We believe that UNCTAD has made significant progress in recent years in implementing the decisions adopted in Midrand and in strengthening its role as the principal coordinating body of the United Nations system in the sphere of trade and development. We see in this the mark of Mr. Ricupero's important personal contribution. We also believe that UNCTAD's significant success in implementing the Midrand decisions is due to the fact that the Conference has devoted greater attention to the specific problems of countries with economies in transition. Many countries in this category have received concrete technical assistance from the Conference in such important issues as managing external debt, joining the multilateral trade system, enhancing the effectiveness of trade, transportation and customs services, and so on. We believe and hope that such useful work will continue in the future.

In conclusion, I should like to congratulate Mr. Ricupero on the extension of his appointment as Secretary-General of UNCTAD for another term of office and wish him further success in this very responsible area.

Mr. Yuan Shaofu (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to take this opportunity to declare its support for the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the appointment of Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). We also wish to convey our heartfelt congratulations to him.

During the past four years under Mr. Ricupero's stewardship, UNCTAD has played a positive role in promoting the economic growth and development of the developing countries and has helped them significantly to integrate into the world economy, participate effectively in multilateral trade negotiations, predict and analyze financial crises and assess the impact of such crises on the promotion of international investment. He has also helped to channel assistance to the least developed countries.

UNCTAD was among the first bodies of the United Nations system to embark on structural reforms and to streamline personnel with a view to improving efficiency. It has achieved remarkable results in this undertaking. UNCTAD has continuously strengthened its links to and coordination with the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. As a result, its cooperation with these institutions has been further enhanced.

All this attests to the hard work, high standards of leadership and trustworthiness of Mr. Ricupero. Accordingly, we wish him new and greater achievements in his next term of office.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The presidency wishes to associate itself with all the good wishes addressed to Mr. Ricupero on the extension of his appointment.

Agenda item 152 (*continued*)

Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Appointment of a member of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country (A/RES/53/104)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 83rd meeting held on 8 December 1998, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/104, entitled "Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country". Paragraph 2 of the resolution reads as follows:

> "Endorses the recommendation of the Committee that its membership be increased by four members, including one each from African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean and Eastern European States, to be chosen by the President of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 2819 (XXVI) of 15 December 1971, in consultation with the regional groups;"

I would like to inform members that, after consultations with the groups of African, Eastern

European and Latin American and Caribbean States, I have appointed Cuba, Hungary and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as members of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to take note of these appointments?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Regarding the appointment of a member of the Committee among the Asian States, I wish to inform delegations that further consultations with the regional group concerned are needed.

As a result of the appointments just made, and keeping in mind that the appointment of one more member is pending, the membership of the Committee stands as follows: Bulgaria, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, France, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 152.

Agenda item 58 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft resolution (A/53/L.74)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to inform members that consultations concerning the closing of the date of the fifty-third session and the opening date of the fifty-fourth session are still ongoing.

In order to allow time for further consultations, I would take it that the General Assembly wishes to postpone consideration of agenda item 58. There being no objection, agenda item 58 will therefore be considered at a later date.

However, I should like to point out that the General Assembly will need to take a decision on these matters no later than the first week of March in order that the organization of the fifty-fourth session may proceed in an orderly fashion.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 58.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.